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PLANNING STATEMENT

LAND WEST OF RUDFORD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, FORD

MARCH 2006

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL				
No.	F	S	06	
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PROPOSED INDUSTRIAL UNIT FOR LMD

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Summary

1. This proposal for a new industrial unit for an established business on the Rudford Industrial Estate represents a highly sustainable development, with wide ranging social and planning benefits, particularly for the existing business and the commercial market within Arun as a whole. In summary, these are:

Sustainability Benefits

- A highly sustainable form of development that optimises the use of valuable previously developed land.
- The provision of much-needed industrial and car parking space for an existing and long established business on the industrial estate.
- Release of three small units for use by other users.
- Ensuring that another Arun business does not relocate to within Chichester District.
- An accessible location and form of development central to the businesses existing customer base.

Balanced View of Policy and Other Material Considerations

- Sustainable form of development.
 - Brings underdevelopment "Brownfield" land into beneficial use.
 - Maximises use of scarce new industrial land.
 - Net environment benefit.
 - Positive enhancement to area.
 - Meets a recognised priority local commercial need.
 - Helps underpin local business base.
2. This proposal represents an ideal opportunity for the development of this "previously developed" site in accordance with the Government's commercial and sustainable development policies. It would provide for much needed centralised commercial floor space for an existing business on the estate, therefore helping to prevent the business relocating into Chichester District.
 3. National, strategic and local planning policies all place strong emphasis on the need to re-cycle brown land in order to safeguard Greenfield sites and land in other sensitive areas. The proposed development successfully achieves a balance between the potentially competing objectives of development and the conservation of the environment, and thereby satisfies the goal of "sustainability". They properly maximise the use of this central "Brownfield" site without giving rise to any planning problems.
 4. This proposal will:
 - Accord with national planning guidance in relation to sustainable development;

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- Accord with the relevant and material provisions of the development plan; and
- Cause no demonstrable harm to any interests of acknowledged importance.

Furthermore, there are significant planning merits associated with the proposals, which further sustainability goals. Accordingly, the presumption in favour of granting planning permission should prevail.

The Existing Business & Location Characteristics of the Site

5. The existing business is LMD. They currently operate from three different units on the Rudford Industrial Estate.
6. Attached to this statement as Document 1 is a letter dated 30th December 2005 from the owner of LMD. This letter sets out in some detail the practical problems that arise from operating from three different sites.
7. In addition LMD have recently secured a major contract with Duncton Vehicle Leasing. This contract now generates some 50% of LMDs business and is set to continue to expand. I attach a letter from their Managing director as Document 2. This letter, dated 21st December 2005, sets out their specific requirements. In particular they require a secure vehicle holding area for 80 vehicles. At present LMD do not have this capacity and they have been given until 2007 to meet this requirement. If they do not achieve planning permission on this site then they will either have to relocate into Chichester District where there is currently greater encouragement towards new business (particularly at the new Tangmere site) or they will lose the contract, with the possible result in financial collapse of the business.
8. LMD have been looking for some time for alternative premises and have contacted numerous commercial agents to see if there are alternative premises available. In this respect I attach at Document 3 a number of letters from local commercial agents. These confirm that there is no land or buildings available in the foreseeable future which would meet LMDs relocation requirements.
9. The site is very well located for a commercial unit. It abuts the industrial estate and has direct access to one of the service roads. It is also directly opposite one of LMDs current units. The establishment of commercial development on the west side of the estate has been established by the appeal decision in 2003 for the expansion of The Page Group.
10. Any views of the site from outside the industrial estate will have the Page Group and other units forming the backdrop. Accordingly the development will not give rise to visual harm. In addition at the present time there is noticeable absence of landscaping on this side of the estate. An integral part of the scheme is the development of a native planting belt (2m in depth) along the full length of the western boundary. Over time this will benefit screening not only the proposed development but also existing buildings in the estate.

Planning Policy

11. It seems to me that Local Plan **Policy DEV8** is the determinative policy in this case.
12. it appears to me that Policy DEV8 broadly accords with the general thrust of advice in PPS7 and PPG4, in allowing then needs of local businesses to be addressed where specific criteria are met. In this regard I submit that there can be no dispute that LMD are a local firm located within the District, to which policy DEV8 could apply.
13. The criteria to be met under the policy are, firstly, that the appellant can demonstrate that no acceptable alternative can be identified within existing permitted or allocated floor space or within or through redevelopment of existing commercial premises.
14. LMD require in the region of 900 sq m of floor space in a location which is suitable for MOTs, car servicing and body shop work. In addition they require a minimum of 50, but ideally 80 car spaces to ensure that they retain their contract with Duncton Vehicle Leasing.
15. The business is currently split between three units and in addition certain equipment, such as vehicle lifts, are in the open. It is not practicable for employees to be working outside on ramps during winter months. In addition being split between three different areas produces significant management and operational problems.
16. The business has been growing over recent years and has an essential requirement to amalgamate and expand its present operations onto a single site.
17. As previously detailed a number of commercial agents have been contacted with regard to alternative premises, but none had any sites or land which would satisfy the needs of LMD.
18. I consider that the evidence provided in this application demonstrates that no alternative site can be identified. In addition the financial effect on the applicants of not being able to resolve their current accommodation problems runs counter to the aims of the policy.
19. A number of other criteria have to be satisfied under policy DEV8. As with the appeal case concerning The Page Group, I consider that no issue can be taken with the first three, relating to design (it matches existing industrial buildings on the site), accessibility and access and parking facilities. Also as with The Page Group development I cannot see any objection to the last two, relating to the protection of the amenities of nearby residents and the incorporation of crime prevention measures where appropriate.
20. This leaves just one criterion, which in the appeal concerning The Page Group, the Council did raise, an objection, relating to the relationship of the

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development to the surrounding built or natural environment, and the inclusion of suitable landscaping.

21. The site is not subject to any landscape designation in the development, or identified as having any particular visual quality. Therefore in accordance with the comments of Lord Justice Wall at paragraph 81 of the in the Court of Appeal judgement in ***First Secretary of State and Others v Chichester District Council*** in planning terms it must be considered to be "*ordinary countryside afforded the least degree of protection*".
22. Whilst the site and the surrounding area are flat, views into and out of this part of the former airfield are contained by roadside hedgerows along Horsemere Green Lane and the Yapton Road, and by tall and dens planting along the runways.
23. From Horsemere Green Lane, the closest public road, views of the site are significantly impeded by the dense roadside hedge and by more recent planting on the outside of the former runway perimeter road. Whilst this latter hedge may provide less screening in winter months, because of its density it still represents a significant barrier to views of the site. Where there are a few gaps the dominating view is of the large warehouse on Unit R. The proposed car park and commercial building would be screened in the context of these large buildings. Roadside hedges would also screen the site from views from the Yapton Road, which is a considerable distance away.
24. In time the landscaping belt along the western boundary will provide a significant screen to the development when viewed from the footpath, as well as softening existing views of the edge of the industrial estate, which at present has a harsh utilitarian appearance.

Conclusions

25. For the reason I have set out above I conclude that the proposal would satisfy the criteria in Policy DEV8 of the Local Plan. It would not cause unacceptable visual damage or have an unduly unsympathetic relationship with its surroundings.
26. Accordingly the scheme satisfies the provisions of the Development Plan and therefore should receive planning permission and as such, the application is commended to the Council for its favourable consideration.